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ABSTRACT

Students holding diametrically opposed opinions about the quality of instruction at the University were compared on a number of other attitude variables. A comparison was made of 2,310 students choosing item 2B and 1,625 students choosing item 3B on the 1969 University Student Census, an attitude and activities inventory given annually to all full-time undergraduates. There appear to be some differences between students who feel the best thing about the school is the "quality of instruction" (2B) and those who feel it is the worst thing about the school (3B). The 2B group tended to seek self-development and be stimulated by coursework and felt this coursework required more intensive study outside the classroom. They also tended to have higher educational aspirations, to live with their parents, and to have less well-educated fathers. Generally, the 2B group had more positive feelings about the university, its faculty, and facilities. They tended to feel that students had more channels for expressing complaints and policy-making opportunities, were more likely to feel students who disrupt the university should be suspended, and were less likely to perceive racism at the university than the 3B group. (SW)

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## Office of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

**UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND**

**College Park, Maryland**

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION AND OTHER ASPECTS OF A UNIVERSITY

Neil A. Fiore and William E. Sedlacek

Research Report # 14-70

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Summary

Students holding diametrically opposed opinions about the quality of instruction at the University were compared on a number of other attitude variables. Students choosing options 2B and 3B to the 1969 University Student Census (USC) (see Appendix) were compared.

Results indicate that there are some differences between students who feel the best thing about the school is the "quality of instruction" (2B) and those who feel it is the worst thing about the school (3B).

The 2B group tended to seek self development and be stimulated by coursework (items 7,21,30) and felt this coursework required more intensive study outside the classroom (item 39). They also tended to have higher educational aspirations (item 16), to live with their parents (item 23) and to have less well educated fathers (item 28). Generally the 2B group had more positive feelings about the University, its faculty and facilities (items 31,33,35,40,41,42,44). They tended to feel that students had more channels for expressing complaints (item 44) and policy making opportunities (item 35), were more likely to feel students who disrupt the University should be suspended (item 38) and were less likely to perceive racism at the University (item 10) than the 3B group.

Thus evidence is provided here that attitudes about what transpires in the classroom are directly related to student attitudes on a variety of topics concerning the University.

Much interest has been expressed in the interaction between the student and his environment; the student's reaction to, attitude toward, and opinion of his academic setting; and the impact of the college experience upon the student (Sedlacek, 1968; Feldman and Newcomb, 1969; Pace, 1969). Even with all this attention on the student and his feelings, many students are insisting that their voices are not heard and that their wishes carry little or no weight in determining school policy. Researchers have grouped students according to their similarities with regard to attitudes, interests, orientations toward ideas and the university, academic expectations, etc. (Apostal, 1968; Clark and Trow, 1966; Pemberton, 1963; Richards and Holland, 1965; Warren, 1968). Though much research has been performed to test for the existence of distinct student orientations, few studies have been put to practical use.

Clark and Trow (1966) derived their four types of student subcultures from the combination of two variables; degree of student identification with his college and degree of student identification with ideas. The Academic subculture is characterized by identification with ideas and the college; the Collegiate subculture is characterized by identification with the college but not with ideas; the Nonconformist subculture is characterized by identification with ideas but not with the college; and the Vocational subculture is characterized by lack of identification with both the college and ideas. Though the Clark-Trow model has some inherent weaknesses (Frantz, 1969), the existence of at least four student subcultures similar to the model have been validated (Gottlieb and Hodgkins, 1963; Pemberton, 1963; Richards and Holland, 1965; Van Adams, 1966; Peterson, 1968; Warren, 1968; Fiore and Sedlacek, 1970).

One aspect of the University of Maryland environment which appears worthy of further study is quality of instruction. Schmidt and Sedlacek (1970) found that lack of stimulating courses was a principal source of student alienation. Additionally Sedlacek (1968) reported that there was more dissatisfaction with the faculty's manner of presenting material at Maryland than at other public universities across the country.

The purpose of this study is to describe two groups of students who have indicated diametrically opposed opinions about the quality of instruction at the University of Maryland. The attitudes and opinions they have indicated by responses to the University Student Census (USC) will be compared in an attempt to gain information about the orientations of these two groups toward the University.

## Method

Students choosing option 8 to items 2 (N=2310) and 3 (N=1625) in the 1969 University Student Census (USC) were separated and compared by chi square analyses on 29 USC items. The USC is an attitude and activities inventory given annually to all full-time undergraduates at the University of Maryland. The Appendix contains items 2 and 3 of the USC.

## Results

Seventeen of the 29 items showed significant differences beyond the .001 level (see Table 1). Caution should be taken in generalizing any significant differences found in this study to samples with smaller N's. The size of the samples used in this study are so large that small differences will tend to achieve statistical significance while perhaps being nonsignificant for practical purposes.

## Discussion

Results indicate that there were some differences between students who feel the best thing about the school is the "quality of instruction" (2B) and those who feel it is the worst thing about the school (3B).

The 2B group tended to seek self development and be stimulated by coursework (items 7,21,30) and felt this coursework required more intensive study outside the classroom (item 39). They also tended to have higher educational aspirations (item 16), to live with their parents (item 23) and to have less well educated fathers (item 28). Generally the 2B group had more positive feelings about the University, its faculty and facilities (items 31,33,35,40,41,42,44). They tended to feel that students had more channels for expressing complaints (item 44) and policy making opportunities (item 35), were more likely to feel students who disrupt the University should be suspended (item 38) and were less likely to perceive racism at the University (item 10) than the 3B group.

Thus evidence is provided here that attitudes about what transpires in the classroom are directly related to student attitudes on a variety of topics concerning the University. As noted earlier, lack of stimulation in one's courses has been linked with student alienation (Schmidt and Sedlacek 1970). Additionally the groups identified in this study resemble at least two of Clark and Trow's (1966) types: Academic for the 2B group and Nonconformist for the 3B group.

Some readers may feel that the nonconforming 3B group is less able and therefore they get lower grades and one would expect more negative attitudes from such a group. Research indicates that it is students with the most ability (Collins & Sedlacek 1970) that are most critical of the

University. However, future research should further explore this relationship as well as relating other variables to attitudes toward quality of instruction, including faculty and departmental ratings, age, sex, and grades.

Of course no cause-effect statements can be made based on these data but faculty and administration should be made keenly aware that student attitudes toward quality of instruction do not exist apart from other aspects of the university or society.

TABLE I

Percent Responses to USC Items Showing Significant Differences (.001 level) Between Students Choosing USC Responses 2B and 3B (see Appendix)

7. Which of the following contributed most to your own development during the past year?

| 2B | 3B | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 22 | 14 | A. | Course work in my major field of interest |
| 11 | 13 | B. | Extra curricular organization activities |
| 12 | 14 | C. | Individual or independent research or study |
| 7 | 10 | D. | Social life (dating, parties, etc.) |
| 16 | 9 | E. | Course work in general |
| 9 | 18 | F. | Friendships made |
| 10 | 9 | G. | Job experience |
| 4 | 3 | H. | Contacts with faculty member (s) |
| 9 | 10 | I. | Other |
| 100% | 100% | | |

10. What is the main reason you feel there are few black students at the University of Maryland at College Park?

| 2B | 3B | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 24 | 21 | A. | Blacks prefer to go to black colleges |
| 10 | 8 | B. | The University discourages them from coming because of its tough academic reputation |
| 8 | 11 | C. | The University's racist practices discourage them from coming |
| 12 | 18 | D. | The University's racist image discourages them |
| 25 | 19 | E. | Don't know |
| 21 | 23 | F. | Other |
| 100% | 100% | | |

16. How much education do you expect to get during your lifetime?

| 2B | 3B | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | 6 | A. | College, but less than a bachelor's degree |
| 28 | 36 | B. | BA or equivalent |
| 38 | 35 | C. | 1 or 2 years of grad. or prof. studies |
| 11 | 10 | D. | Doctor of Philosophy or Doctor of Education |
| 5 | 3 | E. | Doctor of Medicine |
| 2 | 1 | F. | Doctor of Dental Surgery |
| 4 | 4 | G. | Bachelor of Laws |
| 0 | 0 | H. | Bachelor of Divinity |
| 5 | 5 | I. | Other |
| 100% | 100% | | |

21. About 50% of university students typically leave before receiving a degree. If this should happen to you, which of the following do you think would be the most likely cause?

| 2B | 3B | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 32 | 31 | A. | Absolutely certain I will obtain a degree |
| 7 | 8 | B. | To accept a good job |
| 8 | 7 | C. | To enter military service |
| 11 | 9 | D. | It would cost more than my family and I can afford |
| 10 | 12 | E. | Marriage |
| 7 | 11 | F. | Disinterest in study |
| 9 | 7 | G. | Lack of academic ability |
| 5 | 3 | H. | Inefficient reading or study skills |
| 11 | 12 | I. | Other |
| 100% | 100% | | |

TABLE I Contd.

23. Where will you be living this semester?

| 2B | 3B | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 31 | 21 | A. | Parents' or guardian's home |
| 4 | 4 | B. | Other relative's home |
| 7 | 6 | C. | Off campus room |
| 19 | 20 | D. | Rent, own, or share an apartment |
| 3 | 11 | E. | Fraternity or sorority house |
| 28 | 32 | F. | University dormitory |
| 1 | 1 | G. | Veterans family unit |
| 5 | 3 | H. | Own or rent a house |
| 2 | 2 | I. | Other |
| 100% | 100% | | |

28. father's education: Please indicate which of the following statements describes your father's education.

| 2B | 3B | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 18 | 14 | A. | Less than high school diploma |
| 25 | 23 | B. | High school graduate |
| 5 | 6 | C. | Some college work at the Univ. of Md., but no degree |
| 6 | 7 | D. | College degree from the Univ. of Md. |
| 5 | 6 | E. | Some college work at another college in the state of Md. |
| 3 | 5 | F. | College degree from another college in the state of Md. |
| 12 | 11 | G. | Some college work at another college outside the state |
| 22 | 23 | H. | College degree from another college outside the state |
| 4 | 5 | I. | Other |
| 100% | 100% | | |

TABLE I Contd.

| | | Response Group | A Strongly Agree | B Agree | C Neutral | D Disagree | E Strongly Disagree | F Other | Total % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30. | Most of my courses are stimulating and exciting | 2B | 9 | 39 | 30 | 13 | 3 | 6 | 100 |
| | | 3B | 4 | 13 | 25 | 34 | 19 | 5 | 100 |
| 31. | Most faculty advisors have act like they really care about students. | 2B | 11 | 38 | 26 | 13 | 5 | 7 | 100 |
| | | 3B | 4 | 22 | 27 | 28 | 15 | 4 | 100 |
| 33. | Most administrators here act like they really care about students. | 2B | 7 | 29 | 36 | 15 | 6 | 7 | 100 |
| | | 3B | 4 | 16 | 33 | 25 | 17 | 5 | 100 |
| 35. | University students have ample opportunity to participate in University policy making. | 2B | 13 | 31 | 27 | 17 | 7 | 5 | 100 |
| | | 3B | 10 | 21 | 24 | 25 | 17 | 3 | 100 |
| 37. | There should be a special college for new students undecided about their major. | 2B | 12 | 24 | 31 | 24 | 6 | 3 | 100 |
| | | 3B | 19 | 22 | 29 | 21 | 6 | 3 | 100 |
| 38. | The University should suspend students who disrupt the normal operations of the University. | 2B | 25 | 28 | 21 | 14 | 7 | 5 | 100 |
| | | 3B | 18 | 23 | 22 | 20 | 12 | 5 | 100 |
| 39. | Most courses require intensive study and preparation outside the classroom. | 2B | 20 | 47 | 18 | 9 | 2 | 4 | 100 |
| | | 3B | 17 | 39 | 19 | 17 | 5 | 3 | 100 |
| 40. | Most organized student activities on campus are ridiculous. | 2B | 8 | 8 | 25 | 39 | 15 | 5 | 100 |
| | | 3B | 8 | 13 | 29 | 35 | 12 | 3 | 100 |
| 41. | Major University-wide events draw lots of support and enthusiasm. | 2B | 9 | 37 | 30 | 15 | 4 | 5 | 100 |
| | | 3B | 5 | 28 | 31 | 26 | 6 | 4 | 100 |
| 42. | There are many facilities and opportunities on campus for individual creative activities. | 2B | 15 | 49 | 22 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 100 |
| | | 3B | 12 | 42 | 25 | 12 | 5 | 4 | 100 |
| 44. | Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available. | 2B | 9 | 30 | 34 | 17 | 5 | 5 | 100 |
| | | 3B | 7 | 21 | 29 | 28 | 12 | 3 | 100 |

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## Appendix
## Items 2 and 3 of the 1969 University Student Census

2. To me, the **best** thing about the University is (choose one):
   - A. Campus atmosphere
   - B. Quality of instruction
   - C. Student activities available
   - D. Large size
   - E. Geographical location
   - F. My relationship with fellow students
   - G. Course subject matter
   - H. The way it is run
   - I. Other

3. To me, the **worst** thing about the University is (choose one):
   - A. Campus atmosphere
   - B. Quality of instruction
   - C. Student activities available
   - D. Large size
   - E. Geographical location
   - F. My relationship with fellow students
   - G. Course subject matter
   - H. The way it is run
   - I. Other